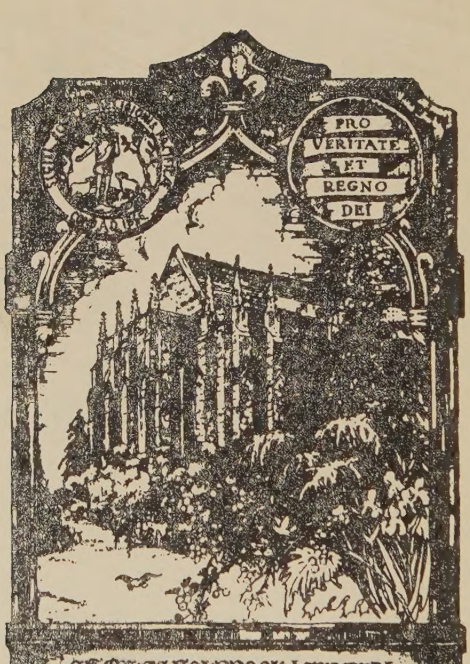
The Theosophical Forum.

Vol. V.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The Theosophical Forum.

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Each member can send questions, answers to questions, opinions and notes upon Theosophical subjects. When necessary, the various communications will be condensed by the editor. Members will be careful to write on only one side of the paper and to use black ink.

All communications should be addressed to Alexander Fullerton, 144 Madison Ave., N.Y.

For paragraphs under the word "Ans." the editor is personally responsible.

May, 1893.

QUESTION CCXXXV.

Does not honest belief in Theosophy tend to weaken the reasoning and investigating mind, just as Christianity does, by holding the conscience in bondage, making doubt and investigation a sin, and faith without evidence worthy of a higher place in our next incarnation?

Ans.—This is a grievous misconception of the whole spirit and teaching of Theosophy. Both are the reverse of the above. You will see the matter better if some Theosophical positions are formulated.

First, then, Theosophy holds that each part of the composite nature of man has direct relation to a corresponding plane of universal being, is therefore not casual or isolated, and has a purpose which can only be fulfilled through development under law. The intellect and the moral sense, like all other departments, are as yet but partially evolved, and, also like the others, are to gain evolution or the man must remain imperfect.

Second, all human evolution proceeds as the result of effort. Physical surroundings, social wants, the increase of knowledge incessantly stimulate to further advance, and ever upon man is

that triple pressure which goads him forward. As he yields thereto and deliberately strives to overcome present limitations and acquire larger strength, his progress goes on. It cannot go on through indolence, indifference, or trust in luck, much less through deliberate suppression of intelligence or conscience. If either is to evolve, it must be through culture, and culture means sustained effort.

Third, all realized knowledge is by personal experience. Intellectual assent is important when no other assurance exists save testimony, and a man is right in accepting facts which he deems proved. But he cannot *know* them as facts, he can only *believe* them, until they have been experientially verified in his own consciousness. Prior to that they are dependent upon the *ipse dixit* of another, and this in turn depends upon the amount of credibility that other is considered entitled to: afterwards they become a personal possession, a permanent and independent property of the individual himself. This is the case equally with intellectual and moral truth.

Fourth, the recorded method of training by Masters states explicitly that They insist upon this experiential knowledge as essential at every step. Mere faith is inadequate: it must be supplemented by, transformed into, personal certainty. Until this is done no further step is possible, for there cannot be a weak spot left behind in an advance which exacts continuous strength.

A summary of the foregoing is that every section of human nature is to be developed, that it must be developed by exertion, that truth is realized only as experienced, and that Masters insist on such experience at each stage. But all this negatives the notion that the use of reason and the moral sense is forbidden, that investigation is discountenanced, that blind faith is exacted. The reverse is the fact.

But there are corroborative considerations. Lecky has shown that all intellectual advance begins in doubt. This must be so, for if a man has absolutely no question of the certainty of his convictions, he will not consider any others. Undoubting assurance means therefore intellectual arrest. Only as he feels suspicion as to the correctness of his beliefs will he examine

into their foundation, investigate the claims of others, and contemplate the possibility of change. To forbid doubt is therefore to forbid advance, for advance is conditioned on doubt. If it is urged that the doubt forbidden is only as to Theosophy, other systems being open to it, the answer is, first, as given under *Fourth*, and, second, that the only way to destroy doubt in a Theosophist, as in anybody else, is by the most thorough examination, an examination so conclusive that no particle of doubt remains. Paragraph *Third* shows this. The Masters perfectly well understand the workings of the human mind, and They fully perceive that to smother doubt would be the most irrational and unphilosophic course possible. Concealed doubt would certainly break out in time, besides weakening up to that time. The only wise policy is to bring it fully to the surface, relentlessly probe and inspect every part of it, give it the amplest consideration, and then give conclusive evidence that it has no real *raison d'être*. There is but one way to destroy doubt—furnish the facts which contravene it.

And why should investigation be deemed a sin when the whole Theosophical philosophy has been educed from it? Every part of the scheme, cosmic, terrestrial, and human, is the outcome of investigation conducted and verified by generations of Adepts. Not otherwise could any of its facts have been ascertained. Truth has nothing to fear from examination: the more thorough the examination, the more satisfactory the proof. If there is any sin in the matter, it appertains to those who will *not* investigate, who refuse to consider any other views than those they have been accustomed to and cherish.

Theosophy's real ground is still further exhibited in the stress it lays on the fact of ignorance as the parent of evil. It thus accounts for erroneous convictions, perverted tastes, misguided conscience. Ignorance gives partial, inadequate views, hiding truth, misleading the sense of right. Only knowledge can illuminate the whole field and make morality intelligent. But freedom is indispensable to the acquisition of knowledge, for a fettered mind can move only as its fetters allow. Hence fetters must be stricken off before the mind can seek freely for fact and thus give validity to conscience, and conscience itself

must be free before responsibility—Karma—can attach. So far from holding conscience in bondage, Theosophy emancipates it and bids it act upon the widest information attainable.

Faith without evidence is credulity, superstition. No Theosophical authority would enjoin it. A very eminent Adept wrote, "*Prove* all things ; hold fast that which is good "; and the perpetual insistance of Theosophy is on demonstration. Faith is appropriate where it has a basis, as when faith in a friend's word rests on knowledge of his character and veracity. So faith in the teaching of an Adept has its ground in evidence of his nature as such, and therefore in the confidence justly placed in his knowledge and truth. But even this is not exacted, nor is it considered worthy of a higher place in the next incarnation. What determines that is our record in its totality.

The stress of historic Christianity has been less on faith in moral order than on belief in dogmatic propositions. Faith is really the responsiveness of the soul to moral truth ; belief, the intellectual acceptance of an assertion. The distinction is partly in the faculty used, partly in the topic on which it is used. Yet even this was made in the original teaching, for Jesus urged "Have faith in God", and "If ye believe not me, believe the works." In later days emphasis was placed, as it is now, on profession of belief in doctrines and creeds, the important thing being propositions about Christ, not imitation of Christ. But Theosophy reverts to the older conception, and considers the test of character to be in moral worth rather than in mental accuracy, perceiving that merit may coexist with intellectual error, though not with moral depravity. In this it is at one with all the seers and Masters through the centuries, however at variance with their ostensible followers. And, like those Teachers, it insists on the priceless value of light and truth, and on the uncompromising effort to attain them.

QUESTION CCXXXVI.

The Higher Self is incapable of pain or suffering: how, then, can it gain experience through the suffering of the lower self? I cannot divest myself of the idea of injustice to the lower self.

K. E. T.—It is quite true that the Higher Self is above all pain and suffering; but the second half of the query confounds the Higher Self with the Higher Ego in the demand, "how then can it gain experience through the suffering of the lower self?" It is not Atma,—that highest principle overshadowing as rather than being *of us*, that gains experience, for all knowledge is already in its possession from the beginning of time; but it is the *Higher Ego* in conjunction with the Spiritual Soul that reaps the harvest of life after life and garners up the store in the imperishable individuality that is linked to Atma, the Higher Self. This is all very clearly set forth in the *Key to Theosophy* in various scattered passages, notably so on pp. 175 and 176; and in yet another place it is distinctly said, "Neither Atma nor Buddhi is ever reached by Karma." And still again, "it is the *individuality* alone that suffers through the personality," the individuality being, as above said, the Mind Principle in its higher aspect when in union with the divine Soul, or Buddhi.

Neither is there any question of injustice to the lower Self, since it is the personality that is the Karma-making principle, and which deliberately seeks, by desire and deed, the varied experience that holds the measure of both pain and delight whereby the individuality grows and fits itself for its ultimate condition. The injustice would be were the eagerly coveted experience denied to the free-will of the personal ego, for it would then, as in the old theologies, be called on to participate in sufferings which are none of its own making by either wish or act, hence a thousandfold more bitter, and consequently more rebelliously borne. In the Theosophic teaching the very essence of justice is disclosed, inasmuch as the lower ego has entire liberty of choice to mark out its own career, the good motives of action building up its future happiness, and the evil ones redounding to its misery, but each alike serving as educative means by which the Higher Ego seeks to conquer and control the lower self

This law of action and interaction it is that finally brings about that harmony of the lower principles with the Higher Ego, the union of which with the Higher Self is the aim of all finite existence.

QUESTION CCXXXVII.

In "Forum" No. 29, in the discussion of Marriage, "J. D. B." says that "marriage, when divested of all priestly interference . . . will be found to promote the higher evolution more, etc., etc." Why "interference"? Does the priest do more than any other officer of law? Surely "J. D. B." does not mean to advise the present generation to ignore the existing marriage laws.

J. D. B.—So far as the officiating priest acts as an agent of the law in legalizing marriages, it is well. In law marriage is a "legal contract." The law provides the form of such contract, determines all its bearings and consequences, and specifies who may act as legal agents in consummating said contract, and thus includes the priest. So far it is well. No legal act could justly be called an "interference." Beyond this legal phase of the officiating priest, there is often a claim of religious authority and prerogative that is pernicious. In Roman Catholic and orthodox Jewish communions religious criterions are held as superior to civil law, and marriages are claimed to be sanctioned or annulled on purely religious grounds without regard to the legal aspect of the case. Misalliances open and patent from all other considerations are nevertheless declared "holy" and the parties "God-united" if the religious test is conformed to. One has only to read the history of the priesthood in the past, the prerogative once accorded the priest, and all the abominations practiced under the religious code, to see that the free consent of the contracting parties and their legal status and relations are all that need be insisted on. Hence when the priest "does more than any other officer of the law" it becomes an "interference." In ancient times when the priestly office really included a knowledge of occult law, and he was a servant of that law, when he was consulted prior to contract and his advice obtained based on the highest spiritual interest of contracting parties and their prospective progeny, the priestly office was far from being an "interference" and divorces were unknown. In a large majority of cases now-a-days the elements of unhappiness and final separation are present from the beginning, yet "sanctified" no less than legal-

ized by the officiating priest. Results are seen in the number of unhappy homes, diseased or imbecile children, and — the divorce and criminal courts. One brute biped cut his "wife's" throat and another shot the top of his wife's head off in one city within a week. Is the priest responsible for this state of things? So far as he is a legal agent only, NO. So far as he assumes religious and sacramental office and fails to possess the requisite knowledge and foresight, YES. An office held without knowledge or power, and yet claiming and exercising prerogatives, is an unwarranted interference with the liberties and best interests of the people.

Children should be properly educated in the first place. They should be taught self-control and self-denial, and learn to apprehend the "eternal fitness" of all things human. They should be taught the far-reaching influences and subtlest effects, the responsibilities and splendid opportunities of the marriage covenant. This is the duty of parents. The true priest may supplement this with occult knowledge of all laws relating to individuals thus already trained. Then marriage may transcend all human legal enactments, and never as now fall below them. *Such* priestly "interference" would be a boon and a blessing indeed. Many a youth thus trained by wise parents and instructed by the true priest might find the Path of deliverance from the "pairs of opposites" and the "sin of separateness," and to rise above all sex. It may be thus seen that the use of the term "priestly interference" had reference only to the ignorant assumptions and sanctimonious prerogatives for which there is no basis in fact, no justification in knowledge, and no warrant in results, and which is therefore a sham.

QUESTION CCXXXVIII.

What is the karmic result when a man, lacking the moral strength to resist drunkenness, avails himself of an artificial remedy, such as a course in a Keeley Institute? Does it free him from future liability in that direction, and is it apt to cause evil tendencies in other directions?

What result ensues from compelling an habitual drunkard to submit to such treatment against his will?

Ans.—Assuming the Keeley remedy to be effective (though upon this no opinion is expressed), it is a physical medicament like any other drug. A man has induced a diseased condition of his system through indulgence in liquor, and the result is an abnormal state of his brain, nerves and stomach. Though the cause is voluntary, the effect is the same as when one has been involuntarily subjected to unwholesome food or air, and as medicinal treatment is needful in the latter case, so in the former. Considered merely as a drug, bi-chloride of gold does not differ morally from quinine; and if the system can be restored through that, it is as legitimate for a drunkard as quinine is for the sufferer from malaria. The remedy may be artificial, but so was the disease; and a man had better accept artificial cure than remain diseased. There is no law, human or Divine, which confines a patient to one class of remedies or excludes him from another. If he cannot procure one remedy, or if it is inadequate, he seeks a second. And so, if moral strength is insufficient to combat thirst for liquor, the Keeley cure (if it is such) is not only proper but desirable.

If an artificial remedy releases from liability to future disease, it may certainly do so without compensating itself in other directions. Nature does not prescribe that we can only get rid of one complaint by incurring a different one. In fact, the loss of one trouble strengthens to oust others, and an approach to health in any department facilitates a like approach in all. If a drunkard is relieved from desire for liquor, he is relieved from the disorders liquor induces, and thus has better chance for general recuperation. This is as true morally as physically. The setting free from the necessity to expend force in combating a temptation enables the subject to use that force in combating some other temptation; one whole field of effort is saved to him, to say nothing of the diffused weakness which failure in that involves.

The third query really brings up the whole question of discipline. No culprit submits to discipline voluntarily. If one declares that compulsory treatment is open to animadversion, he virtually abrogates all disciplinary process, and so most hope of reform. In the case of the Keeley cure, involuntarily en-

forced, there would be no moral merit, as there would be in the case of a purposeful self-cure through will, and so no Karmic good would accrue. But there would result two consequences. One would be that the patient thus relieved would produce no more bad Karma through indulgence, and this would lop off an enormous and far-spreading mass of multiplying evil. For it is to be noted that the supposed cure effaces the *desire* for drink, not merely the habit of using it, and all Theosophists hold that mere abstinence from any wrong while still coveting it has but small result. The other would be that the patient, thus freed from a debasing indulgence, would be more able to recuperate morally in other directions. It is well known that addiction to liquor brings about a general moral declension, rendering the victim gradually indifferent to truth, honor, gratitude, affection, and high principle. When the destructive influence on these is removed, a man's normal sentiments have chance to rally, and thus he may become better because he has lost a powerful stimulus to become worse.

If the Keeley cure has truly the efficacy it claims, or if any other is produced which meets the same end, there would seem no good reason why the civil law should not in time enforce it. Society suffers innumerable evils from men who permit selfish impulses to rule their own conduct and devastate the surrounding community. Necessary protection requires imprisonment for thieves and violent. Yet imprisonment only cuts off opportunity for outrage: it does not cancel the desire for outrage. But if a remedy went further and actually freed from wish for wrong, it would be an incomparably greater boon, one which all would rejoice to see used. If, then, such a supposed remedy would be gladly applied to social pests of other kinds, why not to drunkards who impoverish their families and ill-treat wives and children? There would be no drawback to the satisfaction of administering it, since the fact would be foreknown that the recipient himself would ultimately rejoice in his having been treated, all resentment at temporary coercion disappearing with the advent of a permanent freedom and a restored health.

QUESTION CCXXXIX.

If Christ was an Adept and healed all kinds of sickness, did he not interfere with Karma? As Theosophy did not encourage healing through the mind, was it, then, in another way that he healed, as, for instance, through imagination and not through mind?

Ans.—The supposition (entirely correct in our opinion) that Christ was an Adept nullifies the proposition that he interfered with Karma, for it is an inflexible rule with Adepts that they will not so interfere. Hence his cures must have been performed under his adept knowledge that no such interference would occur. In fact, the very cures which demonstrated his power as an Adept demonstrated also that, as an Adept, he must have possessed the wisdom without which the power would not have been acquired. In other words, a person able to cure is able also and therefore to read Karmic record, and if he cures, does so because he knows that the record justifies him in the cure.

Of the moral fitness of any person to receive so great a blessing as healing, we in our ignorance cannot judge. We can only acquiesce in the obvious probability that an Adept must know his own duty and has executed it. Yet we can fortify our confidence by the consideration that a person suffering Karmically a disease may yet possess Karmic merit entitling him to the cessation of the disease when the Karma manifesting in the disease shall have been exhausted. This might be the case with a person healed through ordinary medical treatment, but it is far more presumable in the case of the many who obtained relief from Christ. Their good Karma may very well have ensured their proximity to him in his career, and so the opportunity of securing from him the boon of restored health. This is all the more likely when we note in the Evangelists the faith which he adjudged a prerequisite to cure. That faith was a perception of his quality and endowments as a spiritual teacher, and implied an affinity for spiritual things, an ability to recognize truth and righteousness when exhibited, a freedom from slavery to materialistic ideas. All this was indicative of a superior internal state, and of course presup-

poses an antecedent spiritual progress, which itself has a Karmic merit. The Jew who said to Jesus, "Master, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do the miracles that thou doest except God be with him," illustrated precisely the argument and the fact.

Perhaps it is going somewhat far to say that "Theosophy does not encourage healing through the mind." It certainly does not encourage the so-called "Mind Cure," and for the excellent reasons given heretofore in the *Forum* and the *Path*. But the technical term "Mind Cure," used as its adherents generally use it, means a good deal more than the rational and legitimate influence of the mind upon the body. It includes a whole category of rash, wild assertions and denials, like those of the callow young woman quoted on page 386, *Path* of March, 1892, who "denied" that any such things as sickness, poverty, storms, and accidents had ever existed, and supposes that facts are annulled if one only shuts one's eyes to them. Furthermore, it has no real philosophy, no comprehension of the forces with which it undertakes to deal, no knowledge of the anatomical and physiological structure of the body upon which those forces are to act, and no adequate system of preparing for practical work the swarm of uneducated practitioners it lets loose on the community with an outfit of phrases instead of facts, and experiment instead of experience. Theosophy discountenances nonsense of this kind no less than nonsense of any other kind, but it certainly recognizes the undoubted influence of mind on matter, and illustrates it from the known doings of Adepts.

But one cannot dogmatically say whether, how, or how far Christ influenced the imagination in his curing. There may have been cases then, as there are now, where diseases were imaginary and to be reached through the imagination. But this would not be true of the centurion's child, or of Peter's wife's mother, or of the woman with an issue of blood ; much less of the restoration to life of Lazarus and the son of the widow of Nain. To the knowledge of Christ there must have been open a vast region of physical fact, hyperphysical influence, and Occult potency of which we can form no thought,

any more than we can now of the method by which living Adepts exercise their control of Nature's hidden forces. His knowledge was vast and scientific, and he knew how to bring appropriate agencies to bear in each case. As he healed, we are told, "all manner of sickness," there could hardly have been but one method employed. Hence speculation is fruitless. But it is abundantly sure that his cures, however effected, were in accordance with Law and not against it, that they displayed his wisdom as well as his power, and that they were not vouchsafed to the faithless or the Karmically unworthy.

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